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## PETROGLYPHS ON THE AMOOR<sup>1</sup>

By BERTHOLD LAUFER

At the confluence of the Orda and the Amoor, near the Gold village of Sakacha-Olen, the right banks of the Orda and the Amoor form a sandy beach, which is covered with innumerable bowlders, partly scattered, partly piled up in a long wall, which, seen from the water, conveys the impression that a fortification or a dike had been erected there. A number of these stones bear curious petroglyphs, evidently of great antiquity. Unfortunately, most of these are so much obliterated that it seemed impossible to obtain satisfactory photographs; for this reason tracings of the petroglyphs were made on paper placed over the bowlders. The place was visited in the spring, when the river was high, and consequently a number of the petroglyphs were under water. Others were discovered high up on precipitous rocks. Some bowlders which were partly buried in sand were excavated, and proved also to be covered with petroglyphs.

The figures represented are partly human faces, partly animals. The general characteristics of the petroglyphs are quite uniform. Figure 29 shows a face of oval form, the nose represented by a triangle, the mouth and lips represented by a single spiral. The eyes also are represented by a spiral ornament, which might be considered as suggesting Chinese affinity. Five lines shown on the forehead probably represent wrinkles or facial painting. Figure 30 represents a figure found on the surface of the same stone from which figure 29 was copied. The similarity of character of these two faces is striking. Figures 31 and 32

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from a report of investigations made under the auspices of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, and published herein by authority of the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History.

are reproductions of sketches made of carvings found on rocks some distance from the bank of the river, both of them occurring on one stone. Figure 32 is partly on top of the stone, partly on



FIG. 29 — Petroglyph in form of a face.

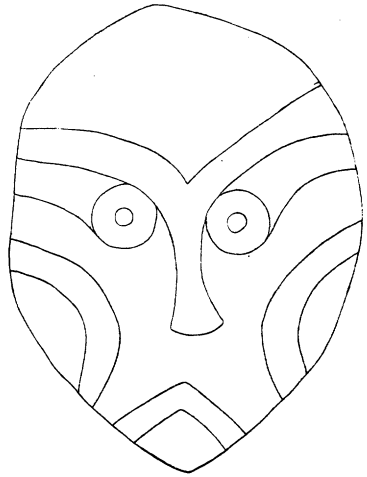


FIG. 30 — Petroglyph in form of a face.

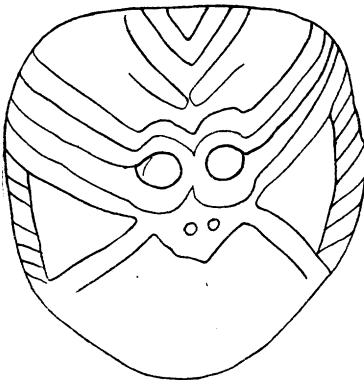


FIG. 31 — Petroglyph in form of a face.

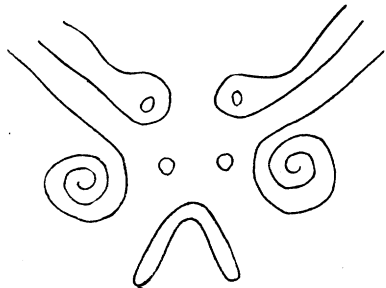


FIG. 32 — Petroglyph in form of a face.

its side, one edge of the stone passing through the middle of the petroglyph. In this figure the characteristic spiral design seen in figure 29 will be observed.

Among the representations of animals, that of an elk (figure 33) is the most remarkable. The head and antlers are shown with remarkable realism; there are three spirals on the back of the animal, while the lines on the lower part of the body probably represent ribs. The elk is represented running. Behind this figure is found the face of a man, the chin and mouth of which are on the surface of the stone, while the eyes and the forehead are continued on the adjoining lateral face.



FIG. 33—Petroglyph of an elk.

There is another petroglyph representing an animal similar to a horse. Tail, back, forelegs, head, eyes, and ears are well preserved, but the remainder is almost obliterated. The Golds stated that representations of animals are very numerous; but at the time of my visit most of them were covered with water. There are three figures on a high precipice which the Golds regard as representations of the *Mudu'r* (the thunder dragon), a conception borrowed from the Chinese. The similarity between the Chinese design and these petroglyphs is very slight. Figure 34 shows a sketch of one of these rock-carvings. Quite recently some Golds have carved the design of a dragon in the same rock. Figure 35 shows some lines found on one of the boulders.

It will require systematic excavations in order to ascertain if the loose boulders mark old burial sites. Some of the Golds maintain that these petroglyphs were made by a people preceding them, whom they identify with the Koreans; but there is also a tradition referring to the origin of these rock carvings, which is as follows:

In the beginning of the world there were only three men, called Shankoa, Shanwai, and Shanka. There were three divers and three swans. Once on a time the three men sent the three



Fig. 34—Amoor petroglyph, said to represent the thunder dragon.



Fig. 35—Amoor petroglyphs,—simple lines.

swans and the three divers to dive for soil, stones, and sand. The birds dived. For seven days they stayed under water. Then they emerged. They brought earth, stones, and sand, and they began to fly about, carrying the earth that they had brought. They flew all around the world. The earth originated when the divers flew, holding earth and stones in their bills. Mountains and plains arose. The divers flew about; and where they flew, rivers arose. Thus they determined the courses of the rivers. They flew toward the sea, and the Amoor river arose. Flying along the shore, they formed bays of the sea.

Then the three men made a man called Ka'do, and a woman called Julchu'. After a while they had a girl, who was called Ma'milji. The people multiplied, and the whole country adjoining the Amoor was populated. Ka'do said, "There are three Suns in the sky. It is impossible to live. It is too hot. I will shoot the Sun." Then his wife said, "Go!" Ka'do went to where the Sun rises. He dug a pit, in which he hid; and when the first Sun rose, he shot him. He missed the second Sun; but

when the third Sun rose, he killed him also. Then he returned. Now it was no longer too hot. Ma'milji drew pictures on stones. Julchu' said, "The people have seen that my husband has killed two Suns." After the Suns had been killed the stones began to harden.

Then Ma'milji said: "There are too many people; there will be no room for them if they do not die. I will die to show them the way." When she was dying Ma'milji said: "The Burunduk does not die; in winter he hibernates; in summer he revives. The Tumna lives as a fish in summer; in winter he hibernates. Thus they will continue to live. The small snake and the large snake will hibernate in winter; in summer they will revive. Other animals shall be born and die. Man shall be born and die."